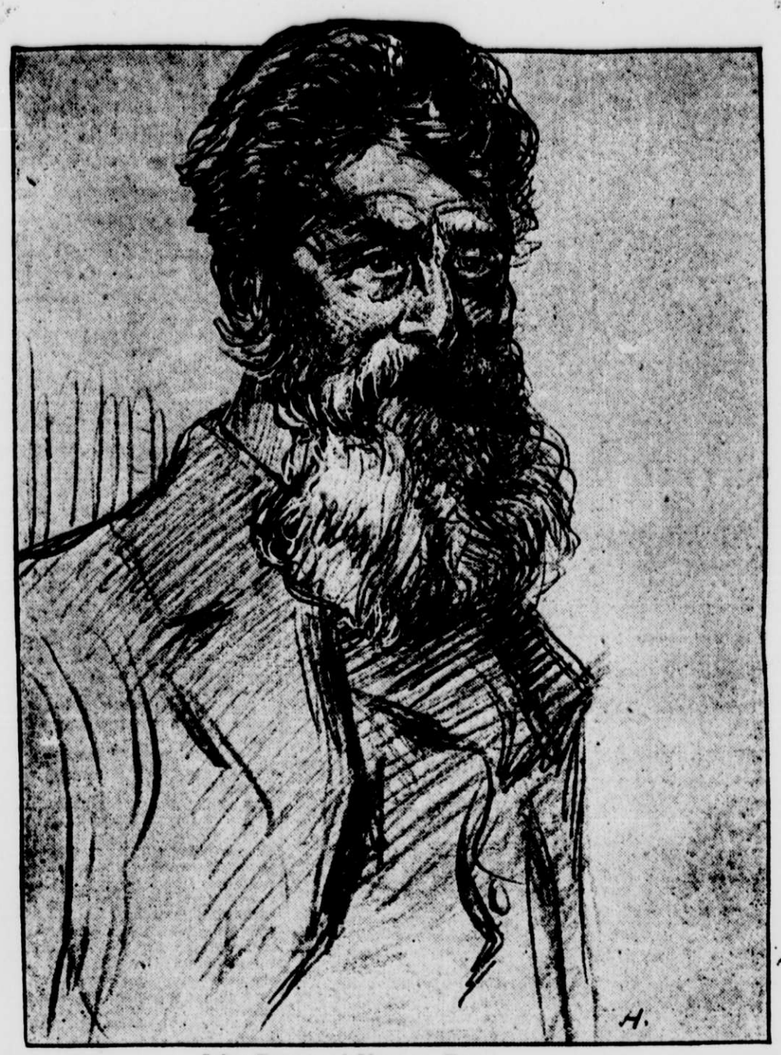
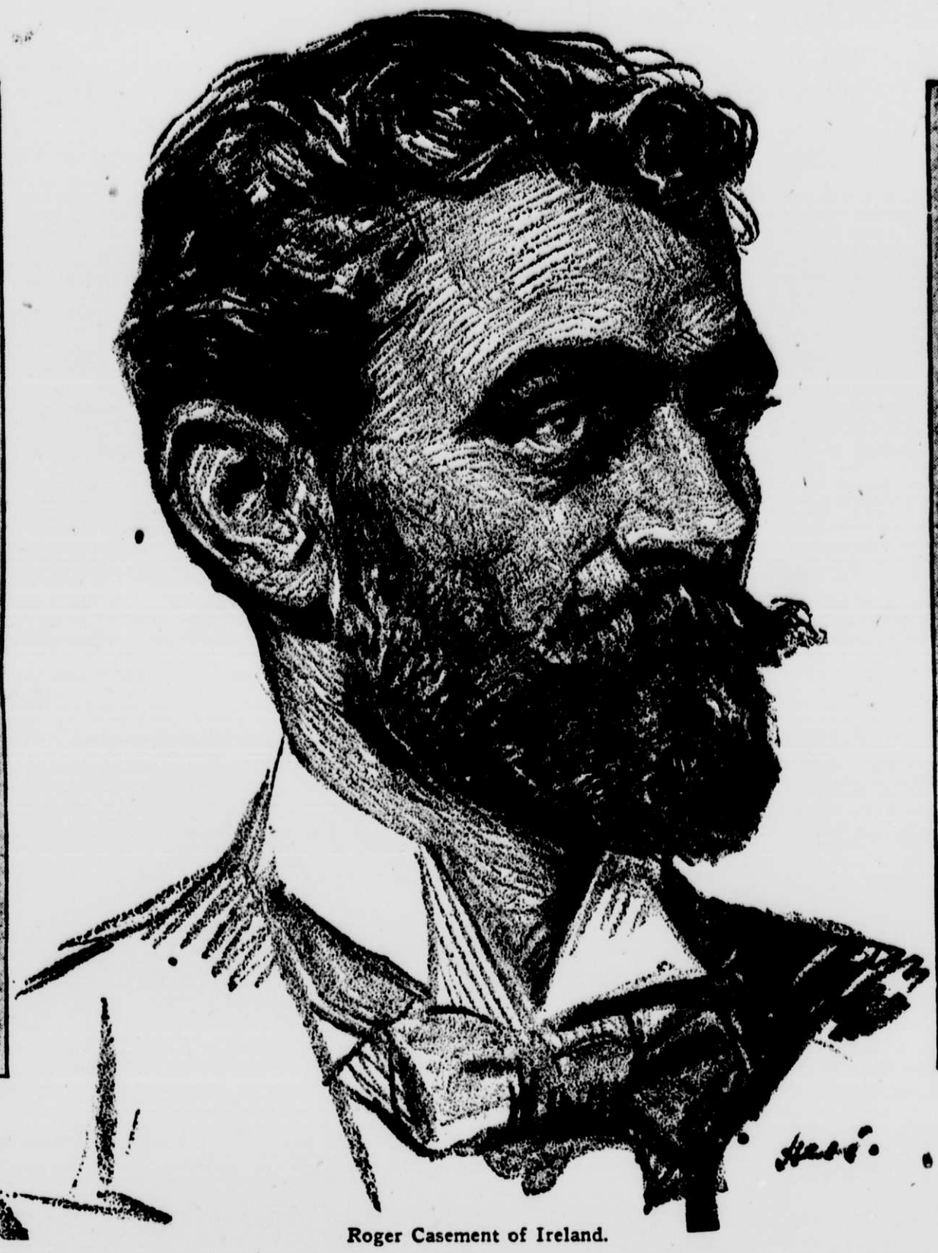
THEY ARE OF THE NOBLE BROTHERHOOD OF DON QUIXOTE



John Brown of Harpers Ferry.



Roger Casement of Ireland.

Don Quixote de la Mancha.

Roger Casement Compared to Knight of La Mancha and John Brown; They Who Knew "Shame That Is Honor, the Failure That Is Triumph, the Defeat That Is Victory"

By JOSEPH I. C. CLARKE.

The Noble Brotherhood.
Don Quixote de la Mancha.
Roger Casement of Ireland.
John Brown of Harpers Ferry.

WHEN the type of Roger Casement was sought after the first news of his arrest in Ireland, the weird, pathetic figure of Don Quixote de la Mancha, clad in piecemeal, rusty armor, mounted on his bony steed, his lance in air, and traversing a land of desolate plains and scattered villages with random windmills, rose to mind. So we should be reminded of the real qualities of one while looking over the lineaments of the other.

Don Quixote must never stand for the successful adventurer. His hopes, judged by that sapient standard we call "common sense," must be indeed forlorn. Success must not seem merely difficult to attain, but must rank with the impossible. His aim should nevertheless be noble, be worth while from the noblest point of view. If he who is likened to the wonderful figure of fiction created in old Spain three hundred years ago by Miguel Cervantes be noble in mien, noble in name, of gentle, lovable character, as well as the leader of a splendid aspiration doomed to frustration, he may ride the path of history beside the Knight of the Woful Countenance, secure in a similar immortality.

And of such was Roger Casement, Irish patriot, English knight, upstanding man, fine gentleman and scholar, whose fate has just been rounded in an English prison.

You could not compare Giuseppe Garibaldi with Don Quixote because here were living acclaim, honors, pension and victory for his beloved Italy, not the victory of his republican dreams, but victory that left Italy free. He had all the makings of a Don Quixote, but events lifted him to a grander though not a nobler class among the world leaders, the conquerors. There must be the shame that is the honor, the failure that is triumph, the defeat that is victory to be a true brother of Don Quixote.

No more forlorn picture can well be imagined than that of Sir Roger Casement landed in a boat from a German submarine on the Irish coast, the ship, bearing arms and ammunitions to Ireland that he had begged perhaps from Germany, at the bottom of the Atlantic to save it from capture by the English—Casement and a single follower, a sinister Sancho Panza afterward to turn informer.

Lives and events are never wholly duplicated, but surely the lonely knight Sir Roger, applying in the rough western country of Ireland for food and contact with feverish, foreshadowed events, running the gantlet of the suspicious eyes of the shoneen gentry, the petty spies of the Irish constabulary, the excited curiosity of gaping peasants over his polite speech and uncouth garments, makes as sorry, as touching a picture as any in which Cervantes placed the Chevalier of La Mancha. This, too, for the man whose vision had led him to see himself landing as a Liberator, met at the shore by trusty friends, backed by a host of sympathizers who would swarm down at night and land his cargo of arms before morning. Then the distribution of rifles, the manning and deploying of machine guns, each with a wealth of bands of cartridges; the seizure of supplies and the grand march to victory across Ireland. Sorry the contrast between the dream and the reality.

Of the inevitable trap into which he walked, of the blighting passing word he got of two men newly dead in a motor accident, and whose names he recognized as men likely to have been on their way to meet him, of his identification in Dublin, of his transportation to London, of his imprisonment in the Tower of London, of his appearances in court, his trial and his sentence to a shameful death little need be said here. It is common property, a story in some respects no doubt warped by jail warders to feed the English press with a laughable side for this "crazy adventurer." He wanted, for instance, as a nobleman, to be hanged with a silken rope. He claimed this, he claimed that—mere gobemouche nonsense set forth for the purpose of misrepresenting him, putting him in the guise his enemies might be expected to desire.

In reality, he acted like a simple minded gentleman recognizing that his life was forfeit in the same absolute sincerity that led him to undertake it all. In the dock on his trial for treason to England, not, as he lucidly pointed out, to Ireland, his words were such as became a man in his position, without pose or rodomontade, his demeanor compelling a respectful treatment from his judges, whose conclusions were as dependable to the Crown as Jeffreys's were two hundred and fifty years ago or Marbury's were when Robert Emmet was the accused more than a century gone. His speech from the dock, the unfortunate post of honor in modern Irish history, will live long beside that marvellous eloquence of Emmet, which has been the beacon of Irish love of Ireland since the day of its utterance in the dusk of the Dublin court before his nagging, bullying judges.

Don Roger Casement, it matters nothing that the English crown struck off your "Sir" in sombre petulance. You had earned that accolade as you had done your best to earn the sentence "Hang by the neck till you are dead" that was so soon to follow.

Now, the Don Quixote of the Spanish novelist had one characteristic that we seldom miss from those in actual life who are worthy on all other counts to be of his transcendentally goodly company, namely that not until well toward middle life did he or they take up the cause for which they were to struggle, and in relation to which they were to reach an enduring fame of sealed and sanctified unsuccess.

Don Quixote was not born to the order of chivalry. He was a gentleman farmer of studious rather than agricultural habits, overgiven to reading the stories of romances, with wonder working knights who stormed the castles of tyrannic lords, penetrated the bone filled calves of man eating giants, rescued sequestered maidens, righted foul wrongs wherever met and held life lightly—the lives of others as well as their own. As they went up and down the world knights errant on their quest, so would he.

Accordingly he furnishes his own title, furbishes up fragments of old plate armor, stands watch by his arms in the yard of an inn and rides forth in search of adventures. And the poignancy of the satire—for as a satire Cervantes began it—lay in the fact that all this was projected on a world and time when the glory, the self-sacrifice, the dedication thereto, what we now name the altruism, were supposedly as extinct as the dodo. The Don of La Mancha was conceived as a mediæval knight errant in a world as modern in its way as ours of the telephone and the biplane.

Don Roger Casement of Irish birth entered the English service at 25 years of age and for a quarter of a century was in that nation's consular service in the most unhealthful quarters of the world for a man of the temperate zone. Many sympathetic English writers have described him in his prime, a man of athletic frame working devotedly at his office and with an efficiency rare in that scattered, poorly paid service. West Africa, the home of fevers, equatorial South America of the burning sun, so shattering to Northern lives and nerves, found him equally cheerful, cultured, courteous, attentive. One trait he developed dangerous for the easygoing official. He was "capable of indignation"—a phrase happily used in his regard, although in connection with Casement's last mental attitude, by Henry W. Nevinson in the current *Atlantic Monthly*.

This capacity for indignation led Consul Casement to resent injustice everywhere he met it, to take up the cause of the under dog all through his official life. It undoubtedly led to his appointment by the British Foreign Office to examine and lay bare the hideous atrocities, tortures and murders practised on the natives of the rubber forests of the Amazon by the agents of the English rubber companies operating there.

It meant arduous toil and the indignant waving aside of bribes and blandishments in the uncompromising narrative he wrote as a report with a virile pen (Putumayo report, English Blue Book No. 8, Miscellaneous, 1912). For this he was honored widely by England, knighted and pensioned, giving the picture of a righteously rounded and regular life. He was nearing 50.

So far as is now revealed he had little if any connection with Irish politics of any kind, or with the leaders of Irish thought in any party, but doubtless he knew his country's history well, and was familiar with the writings of the Irish publicists and poets. He was master of an excellent style and wrote good verse. His new leisure as a pensioned official gave him time to look at things political nearer home more closely than ever.

His views at this time seemed to lead him to hope that Ireland's long struggle for the right to live in self-respect while caring materially for her own interests would come to a good end in home rule. He had noted the phases of the thirty year Parliamentary struggle, and observed the foot to foot, step to step fight under Parnell, McCarthy, Redmond and their often brilliant followers, by which land laws were passed tending to obliterate the old offensive landlord tyranny and giving the land bit by bit to the people.

He saw these laws bettered and broadened, saw the partial home rule of the County Councils and the gradual freeing of the schools from west Briton control. He became cognizant of the growth of the Gaelic League with its revival of the ancient Irish language, Irish epics and Irish art, of Sir Horace Plunkett's splendid agricultural campaign for cooperation by farmers and the more scientific methods of tillage and barter. Then came the black cloud of the Ulster revolt led by Sir Edward Carson with its threat of civil war in the event that home rule should include an acre of Ulster.

The rank and file of the Orangemen heated to madness might have been hard to control, but we see that it could have been done in the recent agreement of Sir Edward Carson to surrender three counties of Ulster to the Nationalists to gain a potential and endable exclusion of the remaining six. But to Nationalist Ireland it conveyed a different impression—a sense of passionate resentment—and at this point we see Sir Roger Casement suddenly take fire. Nationalist Ireland, so tried and so often tricked, saw that a way to answer Ulster's rebellious volunteers was to call the Nationalists to arms "to defend Ireland from its enemies," those at home, the Ulster Volunteers particularly.

This movement Sir Roger joined, and he tells his contribution to the cause in his speech before receiving his sentence of death—a time when men speak plainly. He refers to the meeting in Dublin on November 25, 1913, where the movement was decided upon:

"Since arms were so necessary to make our organization a reality * * * I determined * * * to go to America with surely a better right to appeal to Irishmen there for help in an hour of great national trial than those envoys of 'empire' [meaning the Ulster leaders] could assert for their week end descents upon Ireland or their appeals to Germany."

Then scathing the present Attorney-General for Ireland for saying at Manchester that the Nationalists would neither fight for home rule nor pay for it," he continued: "It was our duty to show him that we knew how to do both. Within a few weeks of my arrival in the States the fund that had been opened to secure arms for the Volunteers of Ireland amounted to many thousands of pounds. In every case the money subscribed, whether it came from the purse of the wealthy man or the still readier pocket of the poor man, was Irish gold."

Here there was the English knight of 1911 exercising his propensity to be "capable of indignation" at its highest, resenting hotly the blazing injustice of the English Government in tamely tolerating the "Ulster rebellion" against Ireland. It was with Sir Roger Casement as with Don Quixote: no hard earned honors, no pitiful pension could bind him to an injustice. It was not the unbalanced mind but the temperament that scorned and rejected compromise, of which so much of our easy give and take world is composed.

Then came the war, then Redmond's appeal for Irish recruits for the English army fighting the battle of Belgium and France if, incidentally, it was England's very own battle against the rise of Germany to economic dominance. There was a sifting of the Irish Volunteers, one body composed of the followers of the radicals among the Sinn Feiners, now anti-Redmond, anti-Parliamentary, bent upon the olden method of facing England.

We are not judging the sanity of states of mind in these developing moments, but some one had convinced Sir Roger that Germany was to win the war, that at any rate she could help a rebel Ireland; that indeed she would. In Sir Roger's purview the thing to be done was to put Germany to the test, and he went to Germany for aid as heartily as he would have gone in his African consular days to bid a savage native chief defiance—courteous, insistent, untiring and utterly void of fear for himself or refusal of what he demanded.

We have no present light on his entire activities there behind the Kaiser's lines. We heard on his trial of Irish born English prisoners addressed by our knight bidding them cast off their allegiance as he had, he whose career, whose bread and butter, yea, whose very life, would be presently at stake in Ireland, for whom he thought they would have loved to take any chance to battle. Few, it seems, responded. A solitary one came with him on his undersea journey, as we remember.

We can imagine his other discouragements among the German army officials. The English press gratuitously, so far as we can tell, represent him as dunning the Germans for support of a rebellion in Ireland, they, finally, in a burst of impatience, putting a shipload of captured weapons at his service, with orders to sink it in case it was in danger of capture, then putting him aboard a submarine with orders to land him on the Irish coast, but "on no account to bring him back to Germany."

The latter clause, the order not to return him to the Kaiser's dominions, one may reasonably doubt. It is at one with the attempts we have noted to make him ridiculous after his capture. The other way round is more like Sir Roger, more like the noble Don Quixote. When his ship with the rifles went down, was it not more like him to demand to be put ashore? At least it fits in with one story that has drifted to me; namely, that after his landing and before his capture, he said to one who cautiously sympathized with him—you know the sort—that his sole aim then was to stop a Sinn Fein revolt.

It was a gleam of consideration that one would expect of him—the life risking courtesy of the knight. He could not reach them; he could not warn them. As it now appears, they would not have listened to him if he had appeared before them face to face in his plight forlorn.

Following the tragic side of the story across Ireland it seems clear that the Sinn Fein revolt in Dublin was undertaken by its leaders without any hope of a successful martial result. That fact should not, however, class it, as it has been classed, with "sheer insanity." It was doubtless in the minds of Pearse and McDonagh, gentle, poetic souls, almost purely sacrificial, done for the purpose of registering once more a people's determination to protest against foreign rule at any cost.

But it was also sheer desperation. When the whole story is made known it will, I believe, become clear that although the actual "rising" came as an overwhelming surprise to the Anglo-Irish Government, it had become to these leaders, Connolly particularly—Connolly, the fighting leader of the labor class—an event of "now or never." In other words, the gradual closing in of the growing police persecution of the Sinn Feiners filled all three with the conviction that unless they "struck a blow" at once they would be powerless to strike ever after.

The Dublin Castle "authorities" were indeed at that hour discussing a wholesale arrest of the leading Sinn Feiners, and it is possible that Connolly, the iron man of the group, had information thereof. The authorities shilly-shallied. The outbreak suddenly followed at the beck of these leaders, with the amazing picture of some 1,100 untrained men, armed only with rifles, holding out for five days against an army in the heart of Dublin, the capital of Ireland.

Elsewhere there was little in the effort of a serious nature. There was a pretty smart fight to the north of Dublin. There was a strained situation in Cork—"rebel Cork"—and arrests that rose to the thousands in many districts, but the astonishing conflict in Dublin alone gave the rising the dignity of rebellion.

We have then a small band of devoted leaders resolved at all hazards to come into the open and challenge the might of England, enormous as it was—a million men in training, with every appliance of modern war to hand, artillery, machine guns, searchlights, flying machines, against this handful without a single field piece. What else had they? What hope did they hold outside the arms in their hands and the cartridges in their belts?

It will be somewhere, some time made known to what extent they had a promise of help from outside Ireland. With the naval forces of England sweeping the seas and patrolling the coasts of the island, such promise must have seemed precarious. It seems probable that a date about Eastertide was set for the coming of that help, whatever it might be.

It seems even that trusty messengers were sent to meet it, but death by the roadside stopped them in the overturning of a motor car. What message they bore cannot be more than guessed at present. Fate was dead set against the Sinn Fein. Whatever was left to chance to decide was decided against them.

A chance, it appears, led to the naval patrol along the west of Ireland being a little more alert and so to their overhauling and challenging a war vessel deftly disguised as a freighter. An explosion on board followed and it carried to the bottom of the sea 20,000 stand of German arms, the shadowy hope of the Sinn Fein. With the woful figure of the bringer of the argosy of redemption arrested on suspicion in a little town by a constable, the entry of Sir Roger into the companionship of the noble order of Don Quixote was complete. Again I say a goodly company.

Viewing Roger Casement's life and its unwritten but suggested apotheosis—a place in the Pantheon of Freedom—it is strange that his American prototype, his fellow members in the august brotherhood of Don Quixote, should not sooner have been called to mind for likeness and comparison—John Brown of Osawatomie, Kan., and Harpers Ferry, Va.

Here is one to the manner born.

Like the Don of the Spanish story he was born to the soil—in this case the soil of Torrington, Conn.—of the oldest Yankee stock, grim, hard working, God fearing, liberty loving folk. His grandfather was a captain in the Revolutionary army. He had a dash of Welsh and a dash of Dutch blood. When a child of five his family trekked to Ohio. It all made for character.

Dressed in buckskin and furs, his early days in the first years of the nineteenth century were spent in the woods and plains of the wild country learning of the herdsmen and the Indians the arts of the frontier, cattle and sheep his other, often his only, companions. At first a sceptic, his reading and rereading of the Bible converted him. He had, he said, "the use of a good library," and Plutarch's Lives and the life of Napoleon Bonaparte loomed large among them.

Thus there grew up two John Browns, one a tall, vigorous, keen eyed man, alive to the economic problems of the frontier, a dealer in wool, a drover, a judge of cattle, a worker and trader like his neighbors; the other a deep and fierce thinker and dreamer, revealing himself scantily to those about him, but letting, as often happens, glimpses of the working of the problems of his soul be seen in his correspondence.

The two John Browns coalesced in many points; for instance, his tenderness to the brute creation. He loved cattle, sheep and fine horses. It was the note of the frontiersman of that day and later to hate the Indians, to see in the dead Indian the only "good Indian." John Brown learned to love them. He travelled once back to Connecticut, where he had some schooling and learned surveying.

Then as he became a man the instinct that leads all Ohio men to look on Federal offices as something peculiarly set apart for them, led him at twenty-five to seek and obtain a postmastership at Randolph, Pa., where also he established a tannery. He had married at twenty and children came fast during the ten years that he filled the office.

In the latter phase he differs from Don Quixote and Roger Casement, for although the Don was a great lover, his idea of love was service, not physical possession; and of Sir Roger, in spite of his warm Irish blood, possibly the same is true. In his youth, John Brown tells us, he was "naturally fond of females," yet "diffident in their company," very much as the Don was, although as we see he got over it. In 1832 his first wife died and a year later he had taken a second. In all his life he never had "the faintest suggestion of an irregular attachment."

Here we have been following the outward John Brown that the world saw, but the inner man had been seized with a deep emotion; the complement of his great compassion and his great love of freedom—a hatred of the institution of slavery in the United States and a tenderness for the unfortunate blacks. In the early '30s, his eldest son testifies, his home in Randolph, Pa., was repeatedly used to shelter runaway slaves.

Those about him had judged him through their earthly eyes as "headstrong, but humane and kind, possessing great tenderness and sweetness of manner"—all, even the headstrong quality, great leading traits of the noble Don Quixote. But the specialization of his convictions, the esoteric trend of his energies, the flowering of his soul, they did not see, nor no man else of that period.

Those who hated Africal slavery, who were ashamed and indignant that it should survive in our republic, were growing in number. It was in John Brown's bones that only a great upheaval could end it. John Brown had gone back to Ohio, and it is of record that in 1837 he assembled his children at prayers in their house at Franklin and swore them all to work with him for the emancipation of the slaves. Evidently he was "capable of indignation."

It was his declaration of war on slavery, as individual to him as our fathers of the Revolution pledging to the American cause "our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." He was not pompous about it, but he meant it all. He did not, however, join any "abolition" movement then or at any other time. As he went on, they were too meek and weak of action for him. He was to work for his end in his own way.

He had been selling wool and travelling up and down the land, and made a trip to Europe on the same business, at which he was never wholly successful. Indeed, his business ill luck and shortcomings were continually, for all his assiduity, leading to losses. As selling agent, he lived at Springfield, Mass., and there, in 1850, in his fifty-first year, first broached to others—free negroes—his idea of a forcible militant suppression of slavery.

His sons emigrated in 1854 to Kansan, where the struggle between free State and pro-slavery was waging, with the aggressiveness on the slavery side. John Brown found in the situation something to his taste. He removed to Kansas himself in the following year, raising money beforehand for arms, and became a captain of the Free State Rangers.

No "border ruffian" could stand before this champion of the Lord. He struck with a heavy hand. Small bands, but every man true and tried, was his practice. The great Biblical example of the band of Gideon was his pole star. So he stopped the pestering midnight forays of the Kansas border by hauling out of their beds at night the chief known offenders and executing them before morning "with short Roman swords," striking terror at a stroke. So, too, he fought and won the battle of Black Jack and the battle of Osawatomie with a handful of men. Northern emigrants felt freer now to flow into Kansas, and their votes for a free State made an end of the struggle, leaving "bleeding Kansas" a memory only.

The issue of slavery was becoming national. John Brown, with his family, was now at North Elba, N. Y., in that Adirondack region which New Yorkers know as Lake Placid, now a summer resort, then a blank, stony wilderness. Slowly but surely the North and the South were drifting to the civil war. But to the Don Quixote mind of John Brown the war was on.

Having followed him so far, we meet no surprise in learning that he had skipped over argument and gone into action. Of necessity this was slow. Backed by a few rich anti-slavery men who subscribed, however, relatively small sums, we see him in July of 1859 assembling some few boxes of rifles and pikes at Chambersburg, Pa.; next hiring a farm at Harpers Ferry with twenty-two white followers, and arranging the preliminaries to attack the Virginia plantations and liberate the slaves of the entire South.

He did seize the town of Harpers Ferry "after reading a chapter of the Bible and uttering an earnest prayer for success." There was shedding of blood of his own band and of citizens. He did liberate one plantation's slaves and capture its owner, but a detachment of Federal soldiers stopped it all under the command of whom? Col. Robert E. Lee and Lieut. J. E. B. Stuart!—names worth remembering.

This was in October. Long he lay sabre gashed, chained to the prison floor, recovering slowly. They tried him in the late November and hanged him upon the gallows on December 2, 1859, and since then

John Brown's body lies a-moulding in the grave,
But his soul goes marching on.
Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!

Here were the immeasurably petty preparations for a tremendous, laudable enterprise. Here were the mystic force, the sad intensity, the unreasonable reasoning, the tragedy of failure that belong to the mighty deeds of the Brotherhood of Don Quixote.

They are, however, psychological signposts, the magic kind that lead as well as point the way—portents as well as examples.

Virginia was the brain and the aristocrat of the South as well as its richest State; her sons were of the boldest and bravest; her slaves a legion. The civil war broke out in 1861, and the Army of Northern Virginia won many battles and great fame under the command of the South's greatest soldier, Gen. Robert E. Lee, and its most dashing cavalryman, Gen. J. E. B. Stuart, but there was Appomattox waiting all the while for Lee, and Stuart, after a world of bravery, dash and skill, had fallen to Sheridan's spear the year before. Truly the symbols of a great reversal were not wanting around John Brown's gallows tree.

Remember too that the slaves liberated by John Brown for a day were the property of the slave owner brought in a prisoner to Harpers Ferry, whose name was Col. Washington, of the family of the Father of his Country. "First in war, first in peace!" It makes the symbolism pretty complete. Not a stone was to be left upon a stone of the Confederacy, and the slaves of the first families of Virginia were to be no exception. They all might sing "Hallelujah!"

Just as John Brown's Pottawatomie "executions" struck terror among the pro-slavery "Border Ruffians," so his death with all its attendant circumstances sent a thrill through the North. There was the true prophetic spirit in John Brown's words in November: "I think that my great object will be nearer its accomplishment by my death than by my life."

Bronson Alcott after setting forth his formidable bodily lines at 59 says: "The countenance and frame are charged with power throughout. * * * I think him about the manliest man I have ever seen—the type and synonym of the Just."

Look along the lines of the faces of those I have named, the Don of fiction as Gustave Doré visualized him, Roger Casement and John Brown. Does not one see the same concentred look in all, the stamp of the fanatic if you will in its best sense; fanaticism joined to something greater, joined to a high purpose, holding itself above the criticism of mere present common sense, and appealing confidently to higher standards—the very men whom the dull eyed, dull witted kill or hold prisoners for life—in order that they may live eternally?

Roger Casement and John Brown might well have shaken hands, and Don Quixote de la Mancha would have bid them welcome to his noble company.